

Needing God's Leading, Part 4 - Romans 2:22-29 – May 15th, 2011

- This is part four of a series that I've titled; "Needing God's Leading," Here-to-fore, Paul has exposed man's sin in order to show man his need.
- Knowing where he's going, in that showing man his need for God, will lead that man to God, whether he's immoral, or sees himself as moral.
- In the previous verses the Apostle just hit these law-abiding Jews right between their moral eyes with their duplicity, and now it's their impurity.

9. To Purity (Verses 22-24)

- (22) You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? (23) You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? (24) As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."
- v22 Paul asks those who say one shouldn't commit adultery, if they commit adultery, and who abhor idols, if they themselves rob the temples.
 - v23 He asks those who brag about the law if they themselves are the ones who're actually breaking the law, and in so doing dishonoring God.
 - v24 Paul tells them the reason God is dishonored is because of them, quoting Isaiah 25:11; God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles.
- I hope that the Holy Spirit is giving us eyes to see what it is the Apostle is doing here, because it's for them then, as much as it is for us now.
 - We, like them, are prone to see ourselves as they saw themselves. Innate within all of us is that need to shed ourselves in a favorable light.
 - By virtue of how we see ourselves as pure and holy, we need to be exposed in our impurity, because we're unholy, in duplicity and hypocrisy.
- Here's why, when non-Christians hear Christians talk about purity, yet they themselves are riddled with impurity, then God is blasphemed.
 - When we won't, thus don't see ourselves in this way, then we won't see our need, and don't allow God to lead, to repentance in godly sorrow.
 - This is a rough way to live the Christian life. I would suggest that the unrepentant life is a hard life. Conversely a repentant life is a blessed life.

Proverbs 13:15 KJV Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors *is* hard.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment as I, by way of illustration, take this hard life cup, to the other side of a very blessed life table.
 - When I see myself, and present myself, as being good, moral pure and holy, I put a crushing pressure on myself to maintain an image of piety.
 - However, when I see myself as not being good, moral, pure and holy, not only is the pressure off, I won't blaspheme God in my hypocrisy.
- I not only don't blaspheme God in my hypocrisy, I actually bring glory and honor to God in my honesty, because He's the source of my purity.
 - This is why, I can not only tell people they shouldn't commit adultery, I myself won't and don't commit adultery, or even idolatry for that matter.
 - The how of a holy life, is found in the purity, and the power, of the person of the Holy Spirit. Without Him, I'll never drink from the cup of purity.

10. To Sanctification (Verses 25-29)

- (25) Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. (26) If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? (27) The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. (28) A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. (29) No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.
- v25 Paul tells them that circumcision has value if they observe the law, but if they break it, they become as though they weren't circumcised.
 - v26 He then asks the question of those who aren't circumcised keeping the law being regarded as though they were physically circumcised.
 - v27 He says those not circumcised physically, yet obeying the law, condemn them as lawbreakers even having circumcision and the law.
 - v28 Paul sort of explains what he means in that a man isn't a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.
 - v29 One is a Jew inwardly, with a circumcision of the heart, done spiritually. That's why man's praise is from God inwardly, not man outwardly.
- Now, what in the world is Paul saying, and perhaps more importantly, how in the world does what Paul is saying apply to my life, in my world?
 - Two thoughts; first going to church outwardly, makes a Christian not, inwardly. Second; who I am outwardly, must be who I also am inwardly.
 - I totally stole this illustration my wife came up with; "going to a gym makes a body builder not, as going to a church makes a Christian not."

William Newell - For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that 'church-membership' which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and 'church-membership' is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

- Just as the Jews had the circumcision and the law outwardly, didn't mean that they were Jews inwardly though they most certainly thought so.
 - So too is this true for Christians who, just because they act like it outwardly, doesn't mean they are Christians inwardly, though they think so.
 - How will one know? There will be a sanctification that comes from the cutting and removing of their flesh, in the circumcision of their heart.
- When one has circumcised their heart, it becomes an outward sign of and inward reality, as the evidence externally of sanctification internally.
 - Simply put, it's doing away with the flesh, without which we can never hope to experience a life of purification, consecration and sanctification.
 - Here's the bottom line; like with the Paul saying that a Jew is a Jew if he is one inwardly, so too is a Christian a Christian if he is one inwardly.
- The reason the Holy Spirit has Paul address this at length and with such strength, is that they thought circumcision guaranteed their salvation.
 - They were even affirmed outwardly by men praising them which is why Paul writes in verse 29 how that their praise came from men, not God.
 - Herein lies the problem, and it begs this question; "are men praising and affirming me outwardly, in the place of God affirming me inwardly?"
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that this comes from the pit of hell. I'm keenly aware this sounds harsh, but please hear me out on this.
 - If I become like these Jews that Paul is confronting, and believe my salvation is guaranteed by my circumcision, I will go to hell for all eternity.
 - If as a professing Christian I think I'm saved and affirmed outwardly absent regeneration and sanctification inwardly I'll go to hell for all eternity.
- This explains the bluntness with which Paul is questioning the authenticity of their salvation. This is a matter of eternal life and eternal death.
 - As the pastor of this magnificent church and a teacher of God's Holy Word, I simply do not have permission to affirm you if this describes you.
 - Just because you go to church, as a professing Christian, doesn't mean you're saved. Outward certainty, must come from the inward reality.

Corrie Ten Boom - "If I'm at your house and I began to move from room to room straightening pictures on your wall, that's commendable, but if your house is on fire, and I began to move from room to room straightening pictures, I've become evil, and wicked not choosing to use my time to save your life."

J.C. Ryle ~ A day will come when those who are not born again will wish that they had never been born at all.